DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 213 305 HE 014 743

AUTHOR Greenleaf, Robert K.
TITLE Seminary as Servant: Essays on Trusteeship.
PUB DATE [81]
NOTE 45p.
AVAILABLE FROM Windy Row Press, 43 Grove St., Peterborough, NH 03458 (10-24 copies $1.50; 25-99 $1.20; over 100 $1.00).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Church Related Colleges; Church Role; *College Role; Educational Benefits; Higher Education; *Leadership Responsibility; Moral Values; *Religion; *Theological Education; *Trustees

ABSTRACT

The leadership role of trustees of seminaries, the seminary as an institution, and the mission of a seminary are considered in two essays. It is suggested that seminaries have the potential to hold the prime position of supporting the churches as they foster religious concern and work to strengthen the moral basis of society. Trustees have the opportunity by questioning and persuasive leadership to encourage the seminary to: (1) evolve an adequate theology of institutions; (2) define in contemporary terms whom and what purpose the seminary can best serve; (3) determine the best curriculum and method to serve the people and purpose; (4) give effective support to churches in the full scope of their mission; and (5) become significant sources of prophetic vision. It is suggested that if a better society is to be built, the best way is to raise the performance as servant of as many institutions as possible by voluntary regenerative actions initiated within them by committed individuals (servants). Questions that should be considered in determining the seminary's mission include: whether the seminary views itself as a model for other institutions; whether critical thought is a high priority in the seminary; whether the image created by the mission statement suggests a strong contemporary institution; whether the seminary attracts students who have the potential to become influential church leaders and whether it attracts capable faculty; whether the seminary experience develops spirit; and whether the mission has power. (SW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED213305

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Robert L Dunlop

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

NE 81943

SEMINARY AS SERVANT

essays on trusteeship

2

SEMINARY AS SERVANT

essays on trusteeship

by
Robert K. Greenleaf

3

published by
CENTER FOR APPLIED STUDIES

Distributed by
WINDY ROW PRESS
43 Grove Street
Peterborough, N.H. 03458

Copyright © 1980, 1981 by Robert K. Greenleaf

THE ESSAYS THAT FOLLOW were written in recognition of two pervasive social problems: (1) Widespread alienation in all strata of the population, and (2) Inability or unwillingness to serve on the part of far too many of the institutions that make up our complex society. Each of these problems may be a contributing cause to the other and neither is likely to be healed without coming to terms with the other.

I believe that new religious insight is needed to deal with the dilemma that this reciprocal dependency presents (religious in the root meaning of rebind.) Such insight may come as a gift to any earnest seeker, but its availability to the many whose lives may be enriched by it will be greatly enhanced if seminaries embrace it, put it in a context so that churches may mediate it, and give sustaining support to churches as they do their work. Any seminary that performs well in this role will be truly a servant in our times. But, as I argue later, this achievement is unlikely to come unless the stated missions of seminaries require it — mission statements that have clarity and power and the ring of comtemporaniety. Such mission statements are not likely to emerge until seminary trustees give a character of leadership that is not yet generally accepted.

The two essays were written to encourage a few seminary trustees to use their influence to bring *one* seminary to the position of greatness as servant, both as a seminary and as a model of institutional quality that will be a powerful leaven in the culture. If one seminary will achieve this, the less venturesome may take courage and try.

The two chapters were written in 1980 and 1981 at the suggestion of Dr. Robert W. Lynn, Vice President for Religion of Lilly Endowment, with whom I share a concern for enlarging the contribution of seminaries of all faiths to the enrichment of American society and to whom I am deeply indebted for helpful criticism of early drafts of these pieces. I am grateful for the incentive to write these because this work caused me to probe deeper than I might otherwise have done into facets of my long held interest in institutions, large and small, and the place of trustees and directors in assuring the optimal performance of these institutions.

Out of my probings the idea of a *hierarchy of institutions* evolved. In this hierarchy I see, at the top, seminaries and foundations. Foundations are in that oversight position because they have the resources and the opportunity to gain perspective which enables them to provide conceptual leadership to colleges and universities, some of whom seem in want of new directions which they are unable to find for themselves.

Seminaries are in a strategic position to give similar support to churches, whose needs are also urgent. In turn, both churches and universities are well placed to give nurture and guidance to individuals and to the whole range of "operating" institutions: governments, businesses, schools, hospitals, communities, families. Any effort to aid our ailing society might well start with a consideration of how the leadership of foundations and seminaries, each from its respective strategic position, might by made more effective.

In writing these essays the role of trustees of seminaries and foundations received fresh scrutiny. I had written earlier on this subject (Trustees as Servants — Chapter III of *Servant Leadership*, Paulist Press 1977) but in reflecting on the nature of this role in seminaries and foundations some new insights came. These two institutions, standing as they do at the top of the hierarchy of institutions, are in a precarious position (in their roles of servants of society) because they have little sheltering support available to them from other institutions. Since not many people are able to provide the constant regenerating influence that all institutions need if they are to serve and prosper over a long period of time, the durability of society rests on a few institutions (such as seminaries and foundations) acquiring self-regenerating capacity. These two essays are premised on the assumption that foundation and seminary executives and staffs, on their own, are not likely to provide

this self-regenerating influence. It is for exceptional trustees to provide. "Exceptional" trustees are not necessarily high status persons by other standards. The ablest trustee chairperson I have seen, in considerable involvement with trustees in a range of institutions, is a low-status person by other standards — but truly great as a trustee and in the chair.

Since exceptional trustees, by definition, are not common, *if* some of this small number can be drawn into the care of foundations and seminaries, these two can then spread the influence of their exceptional trustees to all institutions. I see no better way for a needy society (as ours is) to be well served by its ablest citizens. But seminaries and foundations will need to rise to this view of their opportunities and bring such exceptional trustees to their service, or inspire with new vision those they now have. Addressed here are the opportunities for seminaries. Elsewhere (chapter VI of *Servant Leadership*) I have discussed the opportunities available to foundations.

In the two essays that follow I note that the perspective from which I approach the subject of seminaries and their missions is that of a student of organization, how things get done, not as a theologian or a scholar. Included in my perspective is a long time immersion in the writings of Machiavelli. It is my view that, while manifestations differ, joustings among contemporary power seekers (of whom there are plenty) are little different in their essentials from what they were in sixteenth century Florence. Since I am now retired and no longer in the fray, I turn to Machiavelli periodically as a means for keeping myself refreshed about the nature of the society in which we all live and do our work. I find no other commentator, ancient or contemporary, who is as clear, realistic, or insightful on the use of power in society as Machiavelli. Also I find in his writing much wisdom that is useful to a person or institution that would be a servant in our time.

Against the dismal view of human nature that one gets from reading Machiavelli, I place the religion of hope (religion again used in its root meaning of rebind). I could not read this coldly realistic Florentine, and keep my sanity in this chaotic world, unless I had hope. Not hope that some miraculous intervention will banish evil so that good will prevail. I am not sure that I would be happy in such an aseptic place. My expectations are really modest: that a few able people who think of themselves as "good" will become more dedicated servants of society and will work

a little harder and more astutely at it than some who think of themselves as "good" are now accustomed.

My short run hope is that some of these able good people will become trustees of seminaries and do what only inspired trustees are likely to do: work to give their seminary a vision of greatness that will lift it clearly out of the bureaucratic mold that engulfs so many institutions and set it on a course that will assure that it becomes the influential force that its top-of-the-hierarchy position makes possible.

My long run hope — as expressed in the essay on MISSION — is that, as the result of seminaries establishing their claim to this position, institutions whose primary motive is caring for persons and are governed by persuasion will rise to dominance in the culture over those that seem now to dominate: institutions that are governed by coercion and whose primary motive is private gain and survival in the competitive struggle.

It may be said that the quality of contemporary society is determined by the quality, as separate entities, of the legions of institutions that comprise it. The seminary will be an effective force in this composite as it wields its influence, through the churches, on both individuals and the institutions which they both govern and are governed by.

These two essays, addressed to seminary trustees, are made available for wider distribution because I feel they may be of some interest to those who share my concern for the quality of institutions generally. Further, one who is trustee of a quite different institution from a seminary may be stimulated to produce insights of immediate relevance to one's primary trustee obligation. Then, from my perspective, all institutions are drawing closer together when judged by the challenges they present to their trustees and directors. In the interest of furthering discussion of areas of common ground, these two essays on seminaries and their trustees are offered to all trustees and directors of institutions of all kinds.

The two essays, while having different emphases, are not two distinct chapters. They are two discussions of the same subject written a year apart. The second reflects growth in thinking after the first. They are offered now, not as a definitive treatise on either seminaries or trusteeship but rather as a sharing of introspection on what I believe is common interest with the reader: where can one best put one's effort to build a better society? I see a "good" society as one in which there is widespread *faith as trust*, a quality that encourages people to become constructive

influences in the world as it is — violent, striving, unjust as well as beautiful, caring, and supportive.

Caring for persons, the more able and the less able serving each other, is, in my judgment, what makes a good society. Of all the institutions I know about, I would put the most stringent test of caring on seminaries because I believe that they hold, potentially, through the churches, the greatest leverage to influence the caring quality of the whole society.

The Seminary as an Institution

I VENTURE TO DISCUSS the seminary as an institution, not as a theologian, but as a student of organization — how things get done. I hope that what I have to say from this perspective will be of interest to all constituencies of seminaries, but my primary concern is to speak to trustees, particularly the chairpersons of trustees, who may not have been trained in a seminary. It may be helpful if I share how I came by my interest in organization, and what leads me to a special concern for seminaries.

Up to sixteen years ago most of my concern about organization was directed toward one large business where I had my major career: American Telephone and Telegraph Company. In my later years there I held the position of Director of Management Research. With the help of a professional staff, and within a broad charter, I was both involved and detached so that I could study and advise regarding the management of this huge institution (over one million employees) immersed as it is in sophisticated technology, elaborate human organization, and regulated public service. I was concerned, among other things, with its values, its history and myth, and, intimately with its top leadership. I learned the hard way about the profound influence that history, and the myths of institutions that have a considerable history, have on values, goals, and leadership. And I was painfully aware of the cost in those terms of any insensitivity to history and myth — especially among the top officers.

This experience at AT&T gave me a good perspective and the impetus to venture, in my retirement years, into a close working relationship with a wide range of institutions: universities (especially in the turbulent sixties); foundations (both as trustee, consultant, and staff member); churches (both local, regional, and national) and church related institutions; professional associations, and businesses — in the U.S., in Europe, and in the Third World. This brought me, in time, to a realization of the crucial role of trustees in the performance of any institution, anywhere, and the strategic leadership opportunity in the position of chairperson. This led to writing a monograph on Trustees as Servants (now available as Chapter III in *Servant Leadership*, Paulist Press, 1977).

In my later years as I have had more time for reflecting and writing, and as I have become more aware of the fragile nature of our whole society, I have asked myself the question, where, in the vast range of institutions that serve us, is there the greatest unrealized potential — potential for constructive influence on the whole society? My answer is, of course, a subjective judgment, but I have concluded: *seminaries*, seminaries of all faiths, particularly in our country. Simply in terms of the prudent use of resources, I believe that more can be done to raise the quality of our total society than in any other one way, *if* seminaries of all faiths could move closer to their full potential as servants. (The word *servant* has special significance to me; but rather than attempt to define it explicitly at this point, I would prefer that the meaning that word has for me be permitted to evolve as one reads further in this memorandum.)

I have had a fairly long contact with seminaries because, in my AT&T role of concern for values of that institution, I sought a relationship with professors of ethics in Protestant, Catholic and Jewish seminaries. Some of these developed into lasting friendships which endure to this day. I invited some of these professors to meet with my AT&T colleagues, and I arranged for them to lecture in programs for executives. My relationship with them was close enough to permit me to have an insider's view in several seminaries. Then, later, I served six years on the Visiting Committee at Harvard Divinity School. More recently, I have read some of the history of seminaries, and have talked with historians about the implications of this history.

Even without this involvement with seminaries, out of work with churches and church institutions and my later introspection about the

structure of society, I believe that I would have come to my present view regarding the crucial role available to seminaries. I hold this view because of the strategic space seminaries seem to me to occupy, or could occupy, in the hierarchy of institutions in which seminaries have the opportunity to give sustaining support to churches, and churches, in turn, can give religious nurture and moral guidance to individuals directly and support (as conservers of traditions and advocates of values) the whole gamut of "operating" institutions: governments, schools, businesses, hospitals, social agencies, philanthropies, families, communities. The strength and durability of our democratic institutions rest on the wide acceptance and practice of a common moral code. And I see the seminaries as having the potential to hold the prime position of supporting the churches as they work to foster religious concern and to strengthen the moral basis of society.

When I say that seminaries have the opportunity to give sustaining support to churches I mean much more than training their pastors, important as that service is. I see the opportunity for the seminary to stand as a constant source of intellectual rigor and prophetic vision, of spiritual energy, and as the support and inspiration for strong leadership and society-shaping influence in the churches. One of the simple truths that survives from my business experience is that it is possible for able conceptual leadership in a central staff to sustain exceptional performance in an almost unlimited number of local operating units which, on their own, would be quite ordinary. Further, in my experience, this exceptional performance is best achieved by persuasive conceptual leadership, without coercion or authority. At the core of this unusual business is an assembly in basic science that has been called the closest thing to a university outside the university, and that has produced, in its time, seven Nobel Laureates. This, I believe, is the source of the strong conceptual leadership that I experienced. If a business can make this principle viable, a seminary also has the opportunity to do it — and better. *Please note that I have said only that the seminary has the opportunity, because of its place in the hierarchy of institutions, to give this leadership. If it is to exploit this opportunity, it must generate sufficient leadership power — with its own resources.* (Foundations have a similar opportunity, largely unexploited, to serve colleges and universities.)

As I see churches today — churches of all faiths — they are struggling to shore up a deteriorating society without much sustaining support —

from seminaries, or, with few exceptions, from anywhere else. This brings me to the observation that seminaries (from the perspective of a student of organization), in general and as they now stand, are marginal institutions. They are judged marginal because, in our highly institutionalized society, they do not carry the weight of influence and leadership that their place in the scheme of things makes possible. I sense that they are marginal in their own self-image, in the eyes of their principal constituency, the churches, and in the public view. While seminaries perform an acknowledged necessary function, the training of pastors, they do not generally provide the sustaining support and prophetic leadership for churches, for which they are correctly positioned and of which I believe they are potentially capable. The gap between seminaries and churches is not likely to be healed by a reach from the churches. The initiative rests with seminaries.

In saying these things I am not suggesting for seminaries an unrealistic utopian achievement. What is reasonable and possible with available resources, human and material, is the standard I would apply. I would like to see all seminaries, seminaries of all faiths, reach from where they now are to attain much more of the reasonable and possible — each seminary with its own resources and within its own vision of what it ought to do and to be. I am confident that any seminary that makes this reach, and thereby moves from the marginal stance toward a central and crucial role, will find a much more rewarding institutional existence than what many now enjoy. And I believe that the typical seminary can make this movement, over time, by a series of prudent steps; prudent, but not necessarily comfortable. Prudent, because each seminary will build from its own resources, human and material, with understanding and respect for, and within the vision defined by, its own history and myth. It will not be simple or easy, and it will be a major creative challenge. The first step for a seminary may be to accept that, next to survival, building leadership strength — to lead the churches — may be its first priority in these times.

Premise

Occasionally institutions of all categories (including seminaries) rise to the exceptional under the long term direction of an unusually able administrator. But, usually, when that administrator leaves, the institution lapses, in time, back to the ordinary. There are not enough of these

exceptional administrators around to fill all top administrative posts of all institutions with such persons. Even if, potentially, such gifted administrators were abundant, the common wisdom does not yet provide a way to bring them all into top positions. Able top administrators, with occasional exceptions, have always been, and probably always will be just ordinary good people. The challenge is how to bring an institution to exceptional performance with ordinary good people to administer and staff it. The premise here is that ordinary good people as trustees, and with such a person chairing the work, can do it — *if* they are sustained by a concept of greatness as their goal; greatness as servants of society — in the case of a seminary, greatness in service to churches and through churches to society. What kind of belief builds confidence in this premise?

For one who grew up in the Christian tradition as I did, the roots, of course, are Biblical. " — whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave —" (Matthew 20: 26 and 27). The choice of the word "slave" for the one who would be first suggests that the trustee chairperson will have an unusual dedication and caring concern.

My own personal credo is stated thus:

I believe that caring for persons, the more able and the less able serving each other, is what makes a good society. Most caring was once person to person. Now much of it is mediated through institutions — often large, powerful, impersonal. not always competent, sometimes corrupt. If a better society is to be built, one more just and more loving and providing opportunity for people to grow, the most open way (and the most effective and economical course, while supportive of the social order) is to raise the performance as servant of as many institutions as possible by voluntary regenerative actions initiated within them by committed individuals: *servants*.

Part of the human dilemma in our times is that there is little in our Biblical tradition, or anywhere else, that suggests what makes a servant -- or a serving institution -- in our highly institutionalized society. There is evidence that ours is a low caring (poorly served) society, and concern for this condition has resulted in large scale actions by government (1) to provide money to alleviate suffering and correct injustice, and (2) to give rewards and penalties to compel both individuals and institutions to behave in more socially constructive ways. In an imperfect

world, some of these actions will always be needed. But compulsion is of limited use except to restrain destructive behavior and encourage conforming acts, and money does little other than cushion suffering and injustice. Neither compulsion nor money has much utility in causing institutions to be reconstructed as more caring and more serving. Only the voluntary actions of people inside an institution can accomplish this.

There is a stirring within some institutions today to improve their serving qualities. But this seems to be mostly exhortation or tinkering with procedures, "gimmicks!". Much of it is a sort of "aspirin" treatment that produces a short-lived easing of the pain, but little fundamental change may result from it. However, these efforts have produced a burgeoning literature. The occasional institution that achieves high servant stature under the direction of a gifted administrator who has such a goal is usually conspicuous by the absence of the common "gimmicks" (such as those that are promoted under such labels as "Management by Objectives", "Planned Program Budgeting", etc.). A strong healthy institution, as with a person, is not built by the aspirin treatment.

I cite these conditions not to pronounce a jeremiad on our society (although such may be warranted). Rather I simply contend that there is little to date in our collective experience with institutions that trustees of a seminary may draw on as they seek to raise their seminary to greater servant stature. If the assumption of the hierarchical arrangement (seminaries to churches, and from churches to individuals and to operating institutions) is a valid one, it may be that other institutions will follow, rather than set models for, seminaries. How to produce an exceptional serving institution with ordinary good people to staff and lead it is the goal. If a few seminaries can demonstrate how, other institutions may be encouraged to try.

How To Do It

If, as has been suggested, seminaries have the opportunity to provide strong leadership to churches, and churches, in turn, can provide it to both individuals and to the many operating institutions, then, in concept and vision, a seminary needs to be wholly self-regenerating. No other institution stands as an available resource for seminaries. This means that a seminary, of all institutions, needs the caring support of able and dedicated trustees who are led by an unusually strong chairper-

son. And these trustees will need to find their own way to a constructive role in helping to move the particular seminary from marginal status toward its optimum as a servant of the churches — and society. The question is, how to do it?

The answer to this question will need to be discovered for each seminary, for itself. Most seminaries have considerable history. There are doctrinal differences between schools and within faculties. Their faculties and administrators are unique individuals, they vary in age and adaptability, and most have quite firm, and probably differing positions regarding what a seminary ought to be. Financial resources differ. There are widely varying patterns of relationship to constituencies. All of these aspects combine to give the particular seminary its individual character, and the critical aspects need to be taken into account by trustees who wish to give the seminary new leadership. If trustees are to give new leadership, one generalization is risked: New seminary leadership from trustees is not likely to be asked for by faculty or administrators; nor is the overt offering of such leadership apt to be welcomed. But, then, rarely is leadership asked for or welcomed in any situation short of a condition of overwhelming confusion or imminent disaster. *Leadership* is one of the most talked about and least understood ideas in contemporary discussions. At its best, leadership is a subtle process. As the ancient Taoist proclaimed: "When the leader leads well, the people will say, 'we did it ourselves!' " Leadership needs to be offered, and, if effective, it is voluntarily accepted.

Trustees of a seminary who choose to assert constructive leadership are confronted with an anomaly: they are charged by law with *managing* the institution, and they stand in the position of ultimate responsibility. They possess coercive power, and all who hold coercive power find their ability to lead is clouded by that fact, because leadership rests mostly on persuasion and the responses to it are voluntary, not coerced. And when any person who holds coercive power attempts to lead, there is apt to be the unasked question "Where is the hidden agenda?" Further, while trustees hold legal power, faculties, by long tradition, have evolved a de facto power that is probably more potent. Evidence of the effectiveness of new constructive leadership by trustees may be the emergence of new transforming leadership among faculty and administrators, and *this* is the leadership that will move the seminary from a marginal to a central or crucial role.

What can be said at this point, in advance of experience to confirm the above assertions, about the distinguishing characteristics of constructive trustee leadership in a seminary?

Constructive Trustee Leadership

Constructive trustee leadership begins with continuing to do well what trustees generally do now, such as: serve as legal cover and public image builder for the institution, raise money, authorize and audit the use of money, render gratis consulting services, take those actions required by the charter and by-laws, appoint or dismiss administrative officers, and stand as the court of last resort if internal administration and staff reach an impasse. These are all useful services that help keep the institution viable, but they are maintenance functions; they do not constitute *leadership*, in the commonly accepted meaning of *lead*, to go out ahead to show the way.

Parallel with these usual activities, and perhaps independently, trustees will start the search for the most constructive leadership role for themselves, for *this* seminary, and in these times. What is sought, it is hoped, is a prudent evolutionary movement that is congruent with the seminary's development up to now. What might be the direction of this movement?

The idea of trusteeship goes back to the person who was entrusted to manage the affairs of another. The concept of a governing board of trustees of an institution is relatively new because the vast structure of institutions that serve us now is rather recent — in the last 200 years, with much of it in this century. Two hundred years ago there were governments, armies, churches, and a few universities. But the common lot was life in families and simple communities with most people partly or wholly self-sustaining with the support of modest commerce. To the extent that lives were guided by a theology, it was a theology of persons.

The American constitution makes no mention of the common form of institution, the corporation, because they scarcely existed when our constitution was written. Corporations get their legal status because of the willingness of the courts to construe them as persons. Likewise, our available theology usually turns out to be a theology of persons and there is little to turn to in our theological resources for guidance as to how institutions can be brought under the shelter of theology — and thereby be made more humane and more serving. If one views *all* institu-

tions, large or small, as I do: as intricate webs of fallible humans groping for meaning, order, and light — then, at the core, the problem of all institutions is, has always been, theological. Seminary trustees who seek a more constructive leadership role may find that the best basis for eliciting a new transforming leadership from faculty and administrators will be to start the deliberations leading to a new theology of institutions which the seminary, with the involvement of all of its constituencies, will labor to bring forth, and with the seminary's own institutional development as the laboratory.

The terms "theology of persons" and "theology of institutions" are not in common parlance. They are used here to suggest that, to a nontheologian like the writer of this memorandum who is concerned about the crucial role that seminaries could carry, there is a question about the adequacy of the theological resources of seminaries to support churches so that churches can be of greater help to legions of people who are immersed in the mass of institutions that make up contemporary society. Trustees may want to raise the question, "Are the theological resources of the seminary — whatever they are — adequate for this particular support?" Whatever the answer is, there is an opening for dialogue between trustees and faculty and administrators on what may prove to be one of the more important issues of the late 20th century — important for seminaries, for churches, for all of us.

If a seminary trustee is, as I am, a nontheologian, she or he will venture with caution in raising a question about the adequacy of theology. Yet, as a trustee, the issue must be faced — just as a layman who is trustee of a hospital must be prepared to question the practice of medicine, or the lay trustee of a university must be prepared to question the process of education.

The adequacy of any theology is tested, ultimately, by examining what it produces in the lives of people who have its implications interpreted for them through the mediation of churches. The issue of the adequacy of the available theology of institutions is an appropriate concern for seminary trustees who are searching for their most constructive role because *this* theology addresses both institutions in general and *this* seminary as an institution, in particular.

It is an interesting question. Anyone can make a contribution to theology; but established theologians are best positioned to originate and advocate a new theology of institutions — *and be heard*. However,

nontheologians who are keeping a close watch on our institutions will make the ultimate judgment on the adequacy of that theology. One test they will apply is: what comes through to trustees and directors of institutions of all sorts, for profit or not for profit, that induces them to take and sustain initiatives that result in the institutions they hold in trust becoming substantially more serving than most now are to all the persons they touch? Other nontheologians will make other tests of the adequacy of other theologies — in terms of their ultimate consequences in the lives of people.

Constructive trustees of any institution will listen carefully to those who make the ultimate tests of adequacy of that institution's service. What makes seminary trusteeship especially interesting and challenging is that the seminary has the potential for influencing such a wide gamut of human affairs.

Preparation for Trusteeship

How can seminary trustees initiate the move toward a more constructive role — for themselves, and give the new leadership that helps bring the seminary to optimal strength as a servant of society?

They might first seek to clarify for themselves, and for all constituencies, what the history and myth of their particular seminary is, and they may find much of it is not written and that no single person knows it all. (*Myth* is used in the sense of a story that relates historical events and that serves to explain some practice or belief.)

Then they might gather and study the literature on seminaries in general, which is considerable, and of varying quality, and encourage other constituencies to do the same. There have been studies, some recent, by individuals and groups that raise the issues about seminary purpose and the content and method of theological education.

Trustees, particularly their chairperson, will need to take the time to meet and discuss with faculty, administrators, students, alumni, church representatives, and denominational officers — if it is a denominational seminary. Trustees might attend faculty meetings, student assemblies, and occasional classes in rotation — all if invited. Also they could meet with students in small groups where issues in the seminary are being discussed. While this work may be shared, seminary trustees will do well to accept at the outset that their role with this unique kind of institution will make a large claim on their time.

Out of these discussions the trustees will discover that seminaries, in the course of their history, took on the values of universities, and that their faculties tended to assume the characteristic university position, "the faculty *is* the university". This position in both university and seminary may have come about by default. No one else, trustees for instance, concerned themselves with defining the institution, so faculties, with their large career stake, defined it as themselves. The first concern of seminary trustees in search of a new leadership role may be to search for the idea, the unifying vision, that will define the seminary.

Conceptual leadership by trustees may best be manifested by questions. The trustee is the asker, not the answerer of questions. ***Whom and what purpose should this seminary serve?*** This may be the prime question to be asked of all constituencies of the seminary. The faculty contribution to answering that question will be very important, but not the only source. Gradually, faculties may be led to accept the ***servant*** role: that their best part is to serve whatever purpose evolves from the deliberate search conducted by trustees, a search in which they have had a major but not exclusive role.

I suggest that the key to greatness, in a seminary or in any other institution, is the quality of the dream, the vision, and the primacy of that dream as the ultimate government. Every person, every constituency, stands subordinate to the dream. Helping the dream to evolve and nurturing it is the first consideration in trusteeship.

Trustees, in giving leadership, should be ever mindful of the sensitivity of faculty members to the faculty role in governance and of their apprehension about the trustees' use of their power. Faculty will be concerned that trustees have a sufficient understanding, in depth, of the faculty's perception of the nature of a seminary.

Seminary trustees might also be aware, as they pursue the search for the answer to the question of purpose, that they will never answer it, definitively, or for all time. Yet, at any one time, the seminary should be proceeding with assurance to serve a clearly identified constituency with a firm purpose in mind. Part of the art of trusteeship is to maintain a balance between ***order and stability*** and ***search***. Search, for any institution or any person, should never end. Balance between the two is important, because, in any institution, there is an optimum tension between order and search. Either too little or too much such tension is destructive. Further, except for the rare seminary that has funds at its disposal

to engage new staff for new programs, trustees will acknowledge that their seminary can only undertake what they, the trustees, can persuade the existing faculty to accept.

Once a workable answer, for the present, has been achieved for the question, *Whom and what purpose shall this seminary serve?* the next question for trustee concern might be: *What shall be the content of the teaching and how shall it be taught?* Here, again, the trustee is the asker, not the answerer of the question. The aim is to find the best possible curriculum and method to implement the goal established in answer to the first question. Again, faculty opinion will be important, but not necessarily governing. And, again, unless there is money for new staff, the seminary can only undertake what the trustees can persuade the existing faculty to accept *and learn to do.* Two further questions may be asked by trustees: *How can the seminary best support chuches? How can the seminary be a constant source of prophetic vision?*

When Karl Marx sat alone in the British Museum evolving the theories that would shape so much of the 20th century world, was he not filling a void that resulted from the failure of the churches of his day to come forth with a new prophetic vision that the conditions of the industrial revolution made imperative? But Marx apparently did not foresee the institution-bound society that was evolving as he wrote. And Marxist nations, today, are plagued with the same problem we are: how to make their complex institutions more serving. Thus there is now another void, world-wide — a crisis of institutional leadership. Who will produce a new vision to fill *this* void?

Thoughtful people today are complaining about ours being a "media-dominated" culture, to our detriment. Could it be that, in the absence of an adequate theology of institutions, the media are simply filling the void?

This question helps define the opportunity for new trustee leadership in seminaries.

Persuasion — Prime Art of Trustee Leadership

Trustees, if they are to lead constructively, will understand the meaning of, and be gifted in, the art of *persuasion.*

One is persuaded, I believe, on arrival at a feeling of rightness about a belief or action through one's own intuitive sense — perhaps checked by another's intuitive sense but, in the end, one's own intuitive feeling will

govern. One takes an intuitive step from the closest approximation to certainty to be reached by conscious logic (sometimes not very close) to that state in which one may say with conviction, "This is where I stand." The act of persuasion will help order the logic and favor the intuitive step. And this takes time! But the one being persuaded must take that intuitive step alone, untrammeled by coercion or manipulative strategems. Both leader and follower respect the integrity and allow the autonomy of the other; and each allows and encourages the other to find his or her own intuitive confirmation of the rightness of the belief or action.

If persuasion is ever to rise over coercion and manipulation as the prevailing modus operandi in our violence-prone society, then the clear model of an institution that is led by persuasion alone needs to emerge in the most influential spot possible. I believe that some seminaries have the potential to occupy that spot — to be influential models for other institutions, *to be the civilizing models!*

In summary, trustees have the opportunity, by astute and persistent questioning and persuasive leadership, to encourage the seminary to: (1) *Evolve an adequate theology of institutions for these times.* (2) *Define in contemporary terms whom and what purpose this seminary can best serve.* (3) *Find the best curriculum and method to serve those people and that purpose.* (4) *Give effective support to churches in the full scope of their missions.* And (5) *Become significant sources of prophetic vision, places that are looked to for guidance and light.* A seminary that can achieve these through its existing staff and with its present resources will become a model for the regeneration of all kinds of institutions.

Glittering innovations can always be produced by new people and new money. How can we do better with the people and the money we now have? This is the urgent plea of so many who would become constructive trustees or directors of the all-too-many low-serving institutions of our times.

What guidelines might be useful to the seminary chairperson who would like to make the first move — to do better, much better, with the money and the people the seminary now has?

The Chairperson

All leadership positions are to some extent lonely posts. The chairperson of seminary trustees is no exception. Even if, among fellow trustees,

there are close friends, some detachment is required. One's leadership strategy, whatever it is, should involve one with all trustees on the same terms. While there will be occasional conversations with individual trustees, there should be no grounds for suspicion that some trustee responses are prearranged. I know this contradicts the perception of some experienced trustees; but I am postulating here some conditions for a level of trustee performance that most have not experienced. The chairperson's role *should* be a lonely one. The trustee is what the title implies, the bearer of trust. And the chairperson, if well chosen, stands tall among colleagues in this dimension.

If the above is a reasonable assumption, and if the chairperson of a seminary wants to give leadership to trustees who will have a chance of being the constructive influence described earlier, then a confidant or coach for the chairperson should be sought. This should be someone who is completely uninvolved in the seminary. Every person who carries a difficult or sensitive role needs a confidant or coach. The administrators of the seminary may need such help. But the need of the chairperson is perhaps the most difficult to serve.

In choosing to relate to a confidant or coach, the chairperson is acknowledging that if the seminary is to move toward its higher potential as a servant of society, the one who occupies the chair must be the first to become a learner. But since there is no clear body of knowledge about how to chair effectively, the one who occupies that spot must evolve the strategy for giving new leadership out of one's own experience through interaction with a coach.

All trustees should, as individuals or through committee participation, have some firsthand relations with all constituencies — especially faculty and students. There should be sufficient interaction so that, in their official deliberations, trustees have an experiential basis for good intuitive judgment on matters of trustee concern. The chairperson should have, in addition, a close relationship to administrators so that there is encouragement for dynamic leadership by all administrators. Also, the chairperson will want to help other trustees gain perspective for their evaluative judgment about administrative performance. This is a subtle process; to be close enough to administrative action to be helpful and encouraging, and to be critical and evaluative, but still to be detached enough so that administrators have sufficient scope for initiative and creativity to carry their roles with spirit. The chairperson

should instruct the coach and confidant to be particularly watchful over this relationship between the chairperson and administrators.

All trustees should participate in evaluating administrators. But the chairperson should be prepared to provide more extensive data about administrators than any other trustee is likely to have.

The chairperson also has the obligation to build respect for trustee judgments among all constituencies. Trustees, by law, have the power to govern. But like all such power, its value is inverse to the extent of its use. It is important that the power be there, but *influence*, growing out of respect for trustee judgments, is the critical trustee asset. The chairperson, in consultation with the coach-confidant, should develop a clear strategy for building and sustaining trustee influence. This influence will depend on the evident trustworthiness of trustees as demonstrated by: (1) The quality of greatness of the dream that evolves for the seminary and what it might become as a servant of society. (2) The dedication of trustees in terms of their investment of time and their caring for people — all of the people in the seminary. (3) The adequacy of their information about the seminary. (4) Their ability and disposition to persuade. And (5) adherence to collegiality and careful group process in reaching their judgments — a process that is understood by all constituencies.

Trustworthiness, in the above terms, augurs for confidence in trustee judgments by all who are asked to accept them. The chairperson will be aware of elements like these that build trust, and will be watchful and diligent to encourage their optimum manifestation among seminary trustees. This, it seems to me, is the essence of leadership from the chair.

Not all persons who have a talent for leadership are effective in all situations at all times. If the seminary chairperson finds, after a reasonable time, that his or her leadership is not adequate for this institution at this time, then they should quietly step aside so that someone else can try. Every seminary, every institution, deserves an effective leader in their chairperson — all of the time.

Summary Comment

Three words are commonly used in reference to the oversight of an institution: *manage, administer,* and *lead.* Manage (from manus, hand) connotes control. *Administer* (from administrare, to serve) has the sense of care for. These two, manage and administer, may be seen as the

maintenance functions, terribly important but concerned mostly with conservation and perpetuation.

Lead is a word of less certain origin. Whereas management and administration usually derive from delegated authority from trustees, *leading*, in the commonly accepted meaning of going out ahead to show the way, can be undertaken by anybody. The only test of leadership is that somebody follows. Following, as distinguished from compliance, is voluntary. Thus *strong* leadership can bring unity and clarity of purpose and uncertain leadership can bring disorder and chaos. The latter was conspicuous in the university world, including some seminaries, in the late sixties.

Those who manage or administer in a seminary can also lead — and most do some leading. But consider the five basic questions cited above. *Are the theological resources of the seminary adequate? Whom and what purpose does the seminary serve? What should be the content and teaching method of the seminary? How best to serve the churches? How can the seminary be a constant source of prophetic vision?* These are questions that are best dealt with if there is at least supporting leadership from trustees. Trustees, in their more detached position, can afford to be persistent questioners and visionaries. Administrators, to whom have been delegated the essential maintenance functions, may find that if they undertake this type of leadership alone, it interferes with administrative obligations. Faculty may more readily respond, with transforming leadership of their own, to a trustee initiative than to some administrative initiatives. If trustees will take the risk of leadership toward a larger dream for the seminary, they may do it in a nonconfrontational persuasive way that elicits supportive leadership from other constituencies. Administrators may best give supporting leadership on some matters, if trustees will lead by questioning and persuading.

If a seminary is to move toward its full potential as harborer and nurturer of prophetic voices that give vision and hope, what is needed first is leadership that wants to take the risk of such a larger dream. And it is a risk. All leadership is nurturing and risking. Trustees and their chairperson are more expendable than able administrators. And some of the risks of leadership of a seminary, or any other institution, are best taken by trustees — partly because they can better tolerate the risk, partly because they are better positioned to assume some aspects of leadership.

Leadership does not "belong" to anybody, nor can it be bestowed on anybody. If trustees want to lead, they will need to build a role for themselves, including earning the trust that makes it possible. One of the contributions seminary trustees can make to our evolving society is to build the trustee role so as to make of the seminary a distinctive institution, a model for others.

Some respond to the thrust of this memorandum with these reservations: the hope expressed here for the role of seminaries is too idealistic; trustees are not available who will invest the time required; the money raising role of the trustees has not been mentioned — most seminaries are poor; and the usual chairperson does not have the leadership skills that the role, as described in this memorandum, calls for.

Too Idealistic. What, in the end, will be judged too idealistic is that which is not achieved when the limits of the reasonable and possible with available resources, human and material, are reached. Most institutions I know about, including some seminaries, are so far from pressing the limits of the reasonable and the possible that the charge "too idealistic" has little force. The goals suggested here may be flawed on other grounds, but not on that one.

Not Enough Time. Most able people find the time to do the things that give them joy. In my experience with trustees, whether as participant or observer, I have found some of the proceedings so dull and unrewarding that only a strong sense of duty, a feeling of guilt, or a desire for the prestige of the office would hold a person to it. But the joy of creative achievement will elicit the investment of time — and care — that the full measure of trusteeship requires.

Who Will Raise The Money? How can trustees be expected to raise money when, in the usual seminary, they have only a maintenance role? Give them the kind of role described here and they will *want* to raise money; not out of a sense of guilt or duty, which are not very good motives, but because they understand and believe in what the seminary is about. It is a matter of vital concern to them because they have given decisive leadership in bringing the seminary for the twenty-first century into being.

Inadequate Leadership Skills. Granted; the usual chairperson may not have developed the skills of leadership that the trusteeship function

described here requires. Even though the incumbent may be potentially capable of acquiring those skills, they are not likely to emerge at a high level of accomplishment because they are not expected. The almost universally accepted casual performance of trustees in all sorts of institutions assures that the full maturing of these skills will be rare. Since leadership is a prime concern in the churches, should it not be a central issue in seminaries, both its theological implications and its sensitive practice?

Let me restate my personal credo:

I believe that caring for persons, the more able and the less able serving each other, is what makes a good society. Most caring was once person to person. Now much of it is mediated through institutions — often large, powerful, impersonal, not always competent, sometimes corrupt. If a better society is to be built, one more just and more loving and providing opportunity for people to grow, the most open way (and the most effective and economical course, while supportive of the social order) is to raise the performance as servant of as many institutions as possible by voluntary regenerative actions initiated within them by committed individuals: *servants*.

Elsewhere I have written, "Too much of the effort to care and serve is directed to easing the hurt of the 'system' that is grinding people down faster than the most valiant rescue effort can help them; and too little caring effort is going into rebuilding the 'system' (institutions) that will give greater assurance that those being served grow as persons; *while being served*, they become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants".

If the *performance as servant* of as many as possible of our institutions is to be raised (a necessary condition, as I see it, if ours is to become a more caring society), then somewhere there must be an initiative that starts the movement toward this end. If my premise regarding the hierarchy of institutions — seminaries to churches to individuals and operating institutions — is a valid one, then seminaries are best positioned to take this initiative.

Whoever takes this initiative (and I hope it will be seminaries) will accept the challenge to bring into being a new teachable art of chairing — beginning with the chairperson of the seminary itself.

Then, drawing on its own experience, the seminary may find that it is in possession of the stuff for a prophetic vision for these times.

This is my hope for the seminary as an institution.

"What is now proved was once only imagin'd" — William Blake

Mission in a Seminary

ONE OF THE EASIEST to ask and hardest to answer of all questions is, *What are you trying to do?*

It is hard enough for an individual to answer that question. But it is much more difficult for an institution to answer, and most difficult of all for an eleemosynary institution that has both the momentum of tradition and the support of sentiment to sustain it. There is always the possibility (and the temptation to hope) that enough sentimental support can be stirred so that the tough question can be avoided: *What are you trying to do?*

This essay explores the problem of dealing with this question of "What are you trying to do?" by trustees of a seminary, with particular reference to the strategic position that seminaries occupy in the culture and the great, but largely unrealized, potential influence in that position.

Who Dominates the Culture?

From my perspective, ours is a business dominated culture. The business influence is there, not so much because of the magnitude of the business presence, nor because businesses are more committed than others to serve society, but because the missions of businesses are usually better defined than in other institutions. And they get that way partly because business executives usually have more coercive power to govern

than do executives in eleemosynaries, partly because the pursuit of private gain and the need to survive in the competitive struggle require that missions be clear and forceful.

I am writing this essay because I believe that dominance of the culture by elements like coercive power, private gain, and survival in the competitive struggle do not make for the quality of society that is reasonable and possible with the resources we have. Criticism of business and restraining its influence by government will not, in my judgment, produce the quality of society that is realistically possible. What will build a better society, I believe, and what is well within our resources to do, is to bring to dominance in the culture those institutions whose primary motive is caring for persons and that are governed by persuasion. My hope is that, in time, such predominance will wield a meliorating influence on the harshness of both business and government. A necessary first step is a statement of mission for all eleemosynary institutions that is clear and powerful and that puts a high priority on the contribution of each institution to the quality of society because of what it is, what it does, and how it is governed. In my view, the best placed institutions to initiate a definition of their missions in these terms are seminaries and foundations. This essay will be concerned with seminaries.

The test that I would put on the adequacy of a seminary statement of mission is: What does it promise to contribute, through leadership of and service to churches, to building and sustaining a good society? A good society, as I see it, is one in which there is widespread *faith as trust*, a quality that can encourage large numbers to become constructive influences in the world as it is — violent, striving, unjust as well as beautiful, caring, and supportive. Others might postulate other tests, but this one suggests the premise on which this essay is based.

This essay on *Mission in a Seminary, A Prime Concern for Trustees* is a sequal to *The Seminary as an Institution* (Lilly Endowment 1980). In the earlier essay I noted the basis for my concern for seminaries and suggested that I saw them at the top of the hierarchy of institutions (along with foundations) in which seminaries have the opportunity to give sustaining support to churches, and churches, in turn, can give religious nurture and moral guidance to individuals and support, as conservers of tradition and advocates of values, the whole gamut of

"operating" institutions: governments, schools, businesses, hospitals, social agencies, philanthropies, families, communities.

Statements of mission in a seminary, in addition to giving clear guidance to informed constituencies, also need to be persuasive to people unversed in the technical language of theology, particularly to those who fund seminaries. If contemporary seminaries were all adequately funded, if churches were receiving the sustaining leadership they should have from seminaries, and if seminaries attracted the students they should have in order to provide churches with able professional leadership, I could not make a case for the need for new statements of mission for seminaries. But the need, as I see it, is urgent on all three counts.

In addressing the subject of *Mission in a Seminary* I have a concern for two pervasive social problems: widespread alienation in all strata of the population and the inability or unwillingness to serve of far too many of the institutions that make up our complex society. Each of these problems may be a contributing cause to the other and neither is likely to be healed without coming to terms with the other.

Whom and What Purpose Shall this Seminary Serve?

In the earlier essay, *The Seminary as an Institution*, I suggested that the first question from trustees who want to be effective in their roles is: Whom and what purpose shall this seminary serve? This could be the first question that the trustees of any institution might ask because the answer to it defines the mission. If this question is asked of all constituencies of the seminary, and if trustees work patiently and sensitively for consensus, a mission may be defined that not only helps finance the place and brings the students the seminary should have, but it becomes a vital element of the ultimate government of the seminary — by guiding and assuring those who govern — thereby adding greatly to its strength as an institution.

Every person in whatever relationship, whether administrator, faculty, student, or staff is the *servant of the mission*. All have appropriate and clearly defined roles as servants of the mission. Every significant policy or decision, every act of teaching, the formation of every influence from or to any constituency is made with reference to that mission. There will be problems, of course, but clarity and power in the statement of mission will help resolve them. While primary power

in the seminary is lodged in the commonly acknowledged mission, people in the seminary — administrators, faculty, and students — also have power, but that power is subordinate to the governing idea. When the mission is clear and compelling, people in the seminary do not ask (as I heard them in one instance) "who has the power?" The seminary in which the power of the mission is primary stands among other institutions as a model in which issues are met in creative fashion with reference to "what does the mission require of us?"

In any institution (including seminaries) that is comprised of fallible humans it is important that the legal power to govern be clearly assigned. But the quality of the institution will be inverse to the use of that legal power.

What is Worthy of Survival?

One of my sharply etched memories from the now distant past is a view from my office window, high above the east bank of the Hudson River in lower New York with a commanding view of the harbor. Much of the busy river traffic was made up of tug boats with groups of barges in tow. This scene was most interesting, sometimes frightening, when the tide was running out, perhaps with some wind behind it, and a tug was taking its group of barges downstream. The problem for the tug, under these conditions, was to sustain enough pull on the cables to the barges to keep them in orderly movement toward their destination. Under these adverse conditions, any slackening of that tension could result in chaos.

The memory of those scenes on the river came vividly to mind in the 1960's when I watched at close range as several venerable universities lapsed into chaos and seriously damaged themselves. When destructive forces were unleashed (and such are always latent in any institution) the power of the sense of mission in the university, like the pull of the tug on its barges, was not enough to keep a guiding tension on the several constituencies of the university. The answer to the question, "What in the institution is worthy of survival?" was not clear. There was not enough power in the governing ideas.

If either is faced with potential chaos, there is a parallel between the position of the skipper of the tug and the executive of any institution. The power to prevent chaos does not reside with either. That power is in the *engine* of the tug and in the *mission* of the institution. An able

skipper or executive will better manage the chaos than inept ones and thus render it less damaging. But given sufficient adverse conditions and not enough power in engines or mission, neither executive nor skipper holds the power to prevent chaos! All they can do is to try to manage the chaos as best they can; but it is still chaos.

To the owner of the tug, I would say, "Don't dispatch that tug downstream when the tide is running out unless there is enough power in the engine to handle potential problems." To the trustees of any institution I would say, "Use what influence you have to get accepted a powerful governing idea (mission). If, after a reasonable effort, you conclude that you can't make it, find yourself something better to do. *It is a breach of trust to hold the position of trustee of any institution, and to acquiesce in an inadequate statement of mission.*"

A great contemporary idea of what a university should be doing would make a better university at any time — before, during or after the 1960's. Some university missions may have been inadequate for a long time, but in that critical period of testing, some were found to be inadequate — by the simple test that their missions at that time did not have the power to hold against the forces of chaos. There is much to be learned from those traumatic experiences. Has it been learned?

What is worthy of survival? *An institution with a great mission!* — particularly a seminary with a great mission.

Why is Mission Important in a Seminary?

It is important to avoid chaos because it wastes resources and hurts people. But that is but one of the benefits to be derived from a strong sense of mission in the seminary — or in any institution. Clear and powerful mission is important because it provides the substance of common purpose that all constituencies might be persuaded to accept. Once accepted, common purpose helps to heal, for all involved within the seminary, the pervasive alienation of our times; it helps keep priorities in order; it builds organizational esprit; it clearly signals who should and should not be in the seminary — as students, faculty, or staff as well as the qualities needed in the administration; it provides the basis for resolving, on a reasoned objective basis, the many issues that arise in the course of any institution's life with a minimum of reference to assigned power; and it provides the stimulus and direction for the

optimal performance of the seminary as the servant of all who are touched by its program.

These are qualities that are of great value to all institutions that have the potential to be influential — like seminaries — in order to assure a reasonably civilized society.

There are several ingredients of a healthy viable institution that mission alone will not provide: among these are, astute leadership and consistently able management. Machiavelli observed: "It is an infallible rule that a prince who is not wise himself cannot be well advised. . ."

Mission and Trustee Strategy

Most trustees that I know have some awareness of what is stated above. But they believe that a clear and compelling mission, a great governing idea, is best achieved by installing and supporting an able executive. Able executives are always important, and they should be supported, but I suggest that the executive, with rare exceptions, can only manage what is there. If the executive tries, alone, even with the assurance of support of trustees, to lead the seminary to the influential role that it might occupy, his or her tenure as the executive may be short. The rare executive may make it, but it is a gamble against unreasonable odds for a trustee to assume that the executive will make it *alone*. And there is damage to the institution when the executive tries to give this leadership *alone* and fails.

One of the distressing incidents of the recent past was the appointment a few years ago of an able twenty-eight year old person as president of a college with the explicit charge from the trustees to give the place new leadership (which apparently was needed.) However, the trustees took no action on a statement of mission that would require that leadership, nor did they seek acceptance of the need for it from the several constituencies. The result: early resignation of the new president with damage to both the person and the college.

A prudent seminary trustee, one who would like to see a clear and compelling mission for the seminary, will accept that *it is the trustee's role to make the first move toward a clear definition of mission and secure wide acceptance of it, and then to support prudent efforts by the executive who endeavors to lead the seminary to achieve that mission.*

What would such trustee leadership comprise and where does the executive fit into it? In *The Seminary as an Institution* I suggested that

trustees are most effective as askers of questions, and that the first question might be, whom and what purpose shall this seminary serve? But this is an "umbrella" question and other more penetrating questions will need to be asked, questions that imply criteria that trustees may have in mind for evaluating answers from various constituencies.

The first requirement is a trustee chairperson who has an understanding of, and skill at achieving, consensus. If a seminary does not have someone in the chair who has that skill, and is willing to work long and patiently at using it, or if some other trustee will not endeavor to perform that function (in which case *that* trustee may effectively be the chairperson without benefit of title), that seminary will do well to make the best of its present role until it can find such a person to chair its trustees. Adequate mission, a widely accepted great governing idea, is not only unlikely to be achieved without that skill in the chair, but (as said above) the seminary may be damaged by trying to achieve it. I see the ability to find consensus as the prime skill in the art of chairing, both in defining mission and in presiding over the ongoing governance of the seminary as it works to fulfill that mission.

Trustees whose chairperson has this skill are in a position to pursue the question, whom and what purpose shall this seminary serve? I see six subsidiary questions that might be asked in such a way as to suggest the criteria by which trustees will judge the adequacy of the answers. These questions do not define wholly separate and discrete areas and, to some extent, they overlap. But they may suggest to trustees a basis for initiating a dialogue with the several constituencies of the seminary out of which a clear and powerful statement of mission may emerge.

1. Does the Seminary See Itself as a Model for Other Institutions?

Does the seminary accept its place at the top of the hierachy of institutions in which the seminary is the resource institution for churches which, in turn, serve as support resources for individuals and for the whole range of "operating" institutions: governments, businesses, schools, hospitals, social agencies, families, communities? In asking this question the trustees will be suggesting that the seminary should have a concern for the missions of churches and help churches to clarify their own separate missions, thus preparing themselves for a much greater society-shaping role

than most churches now enjoy — society shaping by leading, not by manipulation or coercion.

This will be a most difficult concept for some seminaries to accept: that they will be models of institutional achievement and influence society, through the churches, more by the example of the quality of life within the seminary than by preachment. If the seminary can reach even a modest achievement as a model of "power in the mission" and can clearly demonstrate the effectiveness and strength in an institution that moves on this principle, it could, in time, influence the quality of the whole society.

2. Is Critical Thought a High Priority in the Seminary?

Critical thought is not necessarily identical with scholarship and the writing of books and papers that establish a scholar's reputation with peers. Scholarship is a necessary condition for critical reflection, but it does not automatically produce it. Critical thought is a fulfillment of the root meaning of seminary: seminalis, seed. It is the reflective thought that produces seminal ideas — ideas that become new visions in both ministers as persons and churches as institutions; ideas that support ministers and churches as they nurture *servants* who may shape the institutions that dominate the lives of all of us.

The adequacy of critical thought in seminaries is tested ultimately by ordinary folk who have its significance in their lives made real through their participation in churches. The incremental actions that build the serving quality of society, or maintain such as it has, are taken by legions of people who get inspiration and guidance from somewhere, mostly from churches — directly or indirectly.

We lack a theology of institutions for these times. I do not fault seminary theologians for this; their trustees are failing to do what only trustees can do: ask the penetrating and persistent questions that insure the adequacy of critical thought in the seminary.

3. Does the Image Created by the Statement of Mission for the Seminary Suggest a Strong Contemporary Institution?

The nature of any seminary closely identifies it with its own

history and tradition. It is precisely that tradition that frees the seminary to be always effective in contemporary society.

It is important that the mission suggest that the seminary, through the churches, is serving this contemporary society and is moving with that society into the uncertain future. Particularly, it should be clear that the seminary is supporting the churches — with the stuff to be strong — as they serve both individuals in their private and family lives and as they prepare, support, and inspire those who mold and shape modern institutions. Seminaries should be seen by informed people as critically important, strong, and useful contemporary institutions. The implication of the word *strong* is that seminaries are an influential society-shaping force because of the leadership they give to churches. But it is important that both the language and concepts of the statement of mission create the image of contemporaniety — it is the quality of *this* society that is the seminary's prime concern.

One of the important learnings from the university debacle of the 1960's may be that more attention to their history might have saved some universities from harm in that difficult period. Clearly, a mission concept that was adequate for 1900 did not suffice in the 1960's. A sense of history keeps one constantly aware that a mission statement that was adequate yesterday may not serve well today.

4. Does the Seminary Attract Students Who Have the Potential to Become Influential Leaders of Churches and Church Institutions, and Does it Attract Faculty Who Are Capable of Training Such Students?

Those who are attracted as students and faculty are influenced by the image discussed above. They are also attracted by what they know, from informed people, is really there.

Is the seminary really strong? Does it prepare people for effective leadership of influential churches and church institutions? Strong people as leaders make strong institutions — because those people have the intellect, stability, integrity, *and spirit* required to generate *trust* in those who might respond to their leadership. *Lead* is used in the common meaning of "go out ahead to show the way." The connotations of *lead* are quite distinct from those of *manage* (control) or *administer* (care for). Leading is venturing and risktaking. "The way is not clear. I will go out ahead to show the way. Follow me!"

Leadership is not a professional calling. In any church, anybody can lead who can generate trust in followers. One task of the seminary is to provide as many professionally prepared women and men as it can, persons who have the ability to generate that trust in churches and church institutions so as to give them great influence.

There may be a place for a seminary that prepares pastors to serve weak or nominal churches. But if, as assumed here, a preferred role of the seminary is to prepare pastors as leaders who will build *strong* churches and church institutions, then the seminary must strive to admit those students who are most likely to qualify for that service. It is important that the mission attract those who want that kind of demanding role and discourage those who do not want it. One feature of any admissions process is self selection by potential students and faculty — they tend to select themselves "in" or "out."

5. Does the Seminary Experience Develop Spirit?

The seminary, like other educational institutions, shapes and forms in ways that we but dimly understand. It is a community that has an ethos that is, in part, a consequence of its mission and how that mission is understood. There is a deeper issue of informing the life of the seminary community which suggests that the literary quality of the mission statement is important. Does it sing, does it carry spirit and inspire qualities of leadership and teaching that are spirit building? Part of the power in a statement of mission is the poetry of its expression that sets the seminary clearly apart from bureaucratic institutions.

Spirit is commonly defined as the animating force within living beings. In a seminary I would want to add a value dimension to this definition: Is the person who is possessed of spirit disposed to be servant? Do those being served, ***while being served,*** become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or, at least, not be further deprived? No one will be hurt.

Whether the seminary develops spirit, thus defined, seems to me to depend more on the quality of the seminary as an institution than on the precise design of its program. Has the seminary itself

evolved as servant; deep down inside is this what the seminary really is? One does not teach about spirit. One really is spirit.

Mission is a statement of how a seminary sees itself — at its very core. Is it, in its essence, *spiritual?* Does the statement of mission reflect this?

6. Does the Governing Idea (Mission) Have Power?

There is only one test: if the mission does not have power, it will not guide those who govern and people will be without purpose. The advantages of a powerful mission, enumerated earlier, will be only partly realized — if at all.

Earlier I suggested that ours is a business dominated culture because the missions of businesses are usually better defined than in most other institutions. They get that way partly because business executives usually have more coercive power than do executives of others, partly because the pursuit of private gain and survival in the competitive struggle require it.

My hope for the future, stated earlier, is that our culture will, in time, become less dominated by institutions that are ruled by coercive power, and motivated by private gain and competitive striving, and move toward a quality of society in which voluntary consensus and search for the good are a greater force than they are today. Could seminaries emerge as leaders of this movement by becoming institutions that are distinguished because of the power of persuasion and caring that comes in response to inspired trustee leadership whose primary tactic is penetrating questions?

These six questions are only suggestions for trustees of a seminary. Each trustee board will devise its own questions. If trustees ask such questions, and thereby give leadership toward defining a clear and powerful mission, what then is the role of the executive? It seems to me that the mission defines that role: it is to take those subtle steps of encouragement and discouragement that keep the seminary clearly centered on growth in achievement of its mission — with as close to consensus as possible.

Leadership — Going out Ahead to Show the Way.

Both the person and the institution are damaged if a seminary chews up its executive because she or he failed when they tried to give

leadership in formulating a new and powerful mission. If the trustee chairperson tries to give this leadership to trustees — and fails, that chairperson can quietly withdraw with little damage to the person or the institution. In short, ***chairpersons are expendable, executives are not.*** Part of the reason for this difference is that the executive is a colleague of the faculty, the chairperson is not (or should not be.) The executive has a career stake in the position, the chairperson does not (or should not have).

The head of the board who is not a seminary theologian (and should not be) can, by leading trustees to ask questions like those above, become a ***public theologian.*** The executive, who is a seminary theologian, cannot, on her or his own, ask questions like these. The executive's role is to lead the process of finding answers and to serve as interlocutor between trustees and various constituencies whose acceptance of the mission is necessary. This is a sensitive role.

With help from the chair, trustees may come to accept that the gap between potential and performance in their seminary is wide, but they can hold firm in their belief in the possibility for a great powerful new mission for the seminary that will, in time, cause a dramatic reduction in that gap and move the seminary into the influential position that it should occupy. As matters now stand, seminary theologians, whether faculty members or executives, would have difficulty holding this view and carrying on with their present work. The seminary must be maintained as it is while its greater future is being worked out.

The best trustees, especially the one in the chair, will believe that a new clear and powerful mission can indeed result from dialogue that questions like the above will induce. Further, trustees will believe that mission will evolve in such a way that faculty and executives grow in the process. It is the kind of faith that people who move institutions of any kind have to have. There are such people available for seminary trustees, and every seminary trustee board should have at least one. That one, with the power of his or her faith, will lead the rest. And, if they fail, they will quietly retire so that someone else can try.

A seminary that is a viable contemporary institution will have at all times a person in the chair who holds this unqualified faith that movement toward potential greatness in the seminary is a realistically achievable goal. Such is faith in the power of a great idea. And it is contagious!

Reflections on the Relevance of Faith to Mission.

What I have been writing the past ten years has brought me into close contact with churches: from local parishes to denominational bodies; and church institutions — hospitals, schools, and seminaries. Most of these involvements have centered on the servant-leader theme about which I have been writing. A major insight (to me) emerged out of this church experience two years ago when I met with an ecumenical group of high level church executives who were convened for three days in a retreat house to consider the subject "The Churchman as Leader." There were just sixteen churchmen and I.

The first two days were taken by a candid discussion among the churchmen of their leadership problems, as they saw them — which were numerous. Change a few words and their problems seemed to me to be no different from those of the harried executives I have been listening to all my life. On the third day I entered the discussion and made some comments based on what I had heard. As I prepared for that third day a disturbing thought came to mind. Their main leadership problem seemed to be that they did not believe their own stuff — not as it applies to the institutional affairs of their churches. They are able, conscientious men, but they lack the kind of faith that anyone who would lead anything in a significant way must have.

I did not share this observation with the church executives the next day, although I touched the edge of it — partly because I was not sure it would be helpful, partly because this was an insight that needed to be digested. If I were meeting with them today, I might share it because, as I have reflected further on my many experiences with churches, it seems to me that the inability (or unwillingness) to be guided by their religious beliefs in dealing with the human affairs of their churches may be the problem of the whole church establishment and it may account for the failure of churches to give the leadership to this troubled society that they are in the best position to give. The one exception to this generalization that I would note is the Catholic Women's Religious; but they seem troubled by their isolation and bewildered by the prospect that it may be up to them to lead. I wish they could generate more power to lead because they seem to have faith that people and institutions in this chaotic world can change for the better — and that inspired leadership by us ordinary mortals can bring it about. I would

say that such faith is *faith as trust*. I once overheard one of the Sisters say, "there is no worse cynic than a religious cynic!"

What is the relevance of these reflections to the subject of this essay, *Mission in a Seminary — A Prime Concern of Trustees?* It is simply this: to most people in seminaries, or who know intimately about them, the notion that *any* contemporary seminary could move from where it now is to the kind of institution described in this essay (and its predecessor *The Seminary as an Institution*) is one of those unbelievable things — a pipe dream. Only a person of truly great faith could accept it as a possibility to be seriously considered. That is why I said earlier that a seminary is not likely to move toward this vision unless it has trustees, particularly in a person in the chair, who are firm in that faith and who have the competence, tenacity, and fortitude that sustained and effective leadership to this end will require.

One would not have to be a cynic to say "I do not see any people on the horizon who might be such trustees for my seminary, especially one to chair it, people who have the faith, plus the necessary competence, tenacity, and fortitude to give the leadership that the achievement of this vision requires." I agree; I do not see them either. But I believe that they are not visible because they are not expected to be there—in fact, *they are not wanted by some.* A letter from a seminary executive, commenting on my essay on *The Seminary as an Institution,* says, regarding the role outlined there for the chairperson, "The idea seems to suggest that a chairperson serves for a long time. In fact, at least among all . . . . seminaries, and perhaps some others, the chairperson serves no more than two years and is, for all practical purposes, the presiding officer only. As I understand what you are saying, I reject it outright." This is a candid expression of what might be a quite general attitude. But such trustees seem to me to be little more than a legal front for faculty and administrators and for the denomination that has de facto control. For a trustee to accept such a limited role is clearly a breach of trust. Directors of a publicly held business corporation who accept this kind of role might be held personally liable in case of some default.

In our times, the heart of the matter of faith in the improvability of human performance — in institutions — may be *trust.* We have the misfortune to live in an era of low trust. I suspect we are in that state because, in relatively short time, we have moved from a society of in-

dividuals relating to individuals to a society in which most of us are involved in complex relationships with institutions. And a widely held basis for trusting people in institutions has not yet evolved. The visible basis for trust, fully functioning trustees, is conspicuously absent in too many institutions — including some seminaries. The first step to recover trust is to install trustees who are trustworthy.

Part of the opportunity to rebuild trust in our times is for trustees to become valid symbols of trust in their institution, and for the one who occupies the chair to stand tall among colleagues in building that symbol. But if there are no visible persons available for trustees, especially chairpersons as so conceived, this opportunity ranks with the unbelievable to many who are involved with seminaries.

I believe the opportunity is real and achievable because of my long experience with people who have demonstrated their ability to carry heavy burdens. Latent in many of these able men and women is trustee potential of the quality that seminaries need. I have had enough experience as an agent in the human transformation process to believe that this latent trusteeship ability can be brought to maturity as seminary trustees, even in some who are old.

Faith is required to do the unbelievable and to demonstrate that something can be done — for the first time. After it has been proven feasible; it may require great courage, strength, and competence to do it again — but it may not require faith. Where is the transforming agent with faith who will wield the formative influence that will produce trustees of this stature for seminaries? *Seminaries will do it for themselves.* Why should someone else produce these trustees for seminaries? Seminaries will produce their own trustees, and they will also render this service for churches and church related institutions — a massive opportunity. A seminary that rises to this opportunity will grow conspicuously in stature.

"And how will we do that?" the incredulous seminary executive or trustee may ask. There is no easy answer to that question because that is what creative leadership is about. A seminary, as it now stands, will find in its present resources the initiative to take the first step. A first order of business for any seminary that would operate with a great sense of mission may be to conceptualize the trustee role so as to make that role attractive to the people who would be the trustees that would give the leadership that would produce a great mission. Such trustees will then

give the seminary the sustaining strength to operate with distinction within that mission.

The first question such a potential trustee might ask is "to whom will I be responsible?" The trustee is, of course, responsible to the closely related constituencies of the seminary: its students, faculty, staff, and administrators and to the churches and other institutions that give it money, that employ its graduates, and that look to the seminary for both leadership and prophetic vision. Each of these constituencies has power — in one way or another and in varying degrees and sometimes in conflict with other constituencies — power to enforce its will on the seminary and on the character of its mission. The wise potential trustee, one who has the capacity to lead the seminary to a great mission, will know that as a trustee, these close constituencies will not be his or her primary responsibility. That primary responsibility will be to the society as a whole and to its needs. And he or she will want to know, "can these close constituencies be brought to accept that this seminary exists primarily to serve the critical needs of society?" (I suggested two of these current critical problems at the outset: widespread alienation in all strata of the population and the inability or unwillingness to serve of far too many of the institutions that make up our complex society.) In order to bring this exceptional trustee to its service, any seminary as it now stands will need to give evidence that it is amenable to being led to acceptance of a great mission that is built around some definition of the public good, a mission that is accomplished through the churches that the seminary inspires, leads, and supports.

A great new seminary mission need not disturb present programs. A significant added dimension, concern for religious leadership, may be all that is required. If that new work is sustained by trustee support, in time existing programs may accommodate to it. Serious concern in the seminary for religious leadership may stir a profound new area for theological reflection. What is hoped for is that religious leadership that originates in seminaries will find its way, through the churches, to nurture values and inspire venturesome spirit in those who will (a) build truly serving institutions and (b) generate in young people hope that they can become servants.

• • •

If one would lead *as servant*, one will first be open to being led by servants. Openness to leading by servants is a manifestation of *faith as trust*.

• • •

In *The Seminary as an Institution*, written a year ago, I wrote, "I am confident that any seminary that makes the reach to move from the marginal stance toward a central and crucial role, will find a much more rewarding institutional existance than what many now enjoy. And I believe that the typical seminary can make this movement, over time, by a series of prudent steps; prudent, but not necessarily comfortable. The first step for a seminary may be to accept that, next to survival, building leadership strength — to lead the churches — may be its first priority in these times."

I still have this confidence.

ROBERT K. GREENLEAF
CROSSLANDS 190
KENNETT SQUARE, PA. 19348